
Staffing Matters & Urgency Committee

9th May 2008

Report of the Director of Resources

Head of Financial Services, Section 151 officer and Proper Officer for the Register Office

Introduction and Purpose

1. This report seeks to reallocate responsibilities currently held by the Director of Resources and to consider whether the current temporary Head of Financial Services should be made permanent.
2. The two responsibilities to be transferred are the Section 151 role and the Proper Officer for the Register Office.

Background

3. The current position with regard to the Proper Officer is that the Head of Public Services was the Proper Officer (a statutory postholder who has responsibility for ensuring the proper administration of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Citizenship ceremonies etc) for the Register Office. When he left the organisation in December members transferred this responsibility to the Director of Resources. The reorganisation paper elsewhere on this agenda is based on not replacing the Head of Public Services and reducing the scope of the Director of Resources post. Therefore this report proposes a way forward.
4. The current position with regard to the Section 151 officer, which is the statutory responsibility for ensuring the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs is that it is within the job description of the Director of Resources post. There is a delegation scheme within the Resources department that allocates specific responsibilities relating to section 151 to the Head of Financial Services and to the Head of audit and Risk Management. The Director of Resources is currently being recruited to, but as there are no internal candidates, it is now certain that there will be a gap of up to 3 months between the existing postholder leaving and the new one arriving. Arrangements for covering that gap are set out in the reorganisation report elsewhere on this agenda, but in the meantime temporary arrangements for the section 151 responsibility must be made. There will be some specific duties for the relevant postholder to carry out during the gap, most notably the preparation and signing of the final accounts for 2007/8.

5. The current position regarding the Head of Financial Services is that as the Council was facing a number of key financial matters following the departure of Peter Steed in the autumn, a member selection process took place based on internal candidates only. This was to speed up recruitment at a key time in order that someone could be in place to contribute to the 2008/9 budget process, the FMS replacement project, closure of accounts etc. Sian Hansom was appointed on a temporary basis until march 2009.

Proposals and Analysis

6. It is proposed that the Proper Officer for the Register Office be Andy Hudson (an Assistant Director in Neighbourhood Services) and that the Register Office Service be transferred to him. The benefits of this are that it would bring together this very customer services orientated, but regulatory service together with other services of a similar nature such as licensing, trading standards and the crematorium. An alternative would be to transfer the service to Legal and Democratic Services which is quite common elsewhere and would focus on the regulatory side of the business. On balance, despite the fact that both options are workable and that the Council has had slightly more concerns in the past with regulatory issues in the Register Office, a move to Neighbourhood Services is recommended, due to the customer focus and the synergy.
7. It is the intention that as this role is similar to those already carried out by the Andy Hudson the transfer of these responsibilities would be significant enough to affect his grade. Unfortunately during review of his current job description it has been found to be out of date and thus cannot be re-evaluated with the Proper Officer responsibilities added in, until it is redrafted to properly include aspects of his current job. Members are therefore asked to approve this transfer of responsibilities subject to them not increasing existing grade. If that were to be the case then the issue would be brought back to members.
8. It is proposed to transfer all Section 151 responsibilities currently fulfilled by both the Director of Resources and the Head of Audit and Risk Management (who are both leaving in June) to the Head of Financial Services (who will be the Council's most senior financial officer), from the 14th June 2008 until a new Director of Resources starts. This will involve a variety of responsibilities for preparing and signing the accounts and various related documentation, for monitoring compliance with Financial Regulations and granting appropriate waivers and for playing a leading role in Governance. A full report was presented to members a few years ago setting out the responsibilities and duties of the Section 151 officer and this can be provided to members on request.
9. In addition it is proposed to transfer all the Director of Resources responsibilities and formal delegations for pensions matters to the Head of Financial Services for the same period as the section 151 responsibilities. These pension responsibilities are focussed around chairing the officer

pensions appeals board, representing the Council at meeting with the County Council who run the pension fund, and determining, interpreting and implementing pensions policy. There may be some extra work in this area relating to the pensions issues arising from Job Evaluation and Equal Pay.

10. In addition as a result of the Head of Audit and Risk Management leaving the Council needs to designate a Chief Internal Auditor until her replacement starts. It is proposed that Max Thomas be designated as Chief Internal Auditor and that he reports to the Sec 151 officer. This to be on a temporary basis from June 21st until a new head of Audit and Risk Management starts.
11. Members are asked to consider confirming Sian Hansom as the permanent head of Financial Services. The reasons why members may wish to do this are
 - 1) that the Resources department will have lost 4 of its 6 Chief Officers within 9 months and 1 of its 3 Finance Managers. None have yet been replaced on a permanent basis and it is the intention that the Head of Public Services won't be. Making the Head of Financial Services permanent would therefore add stability and consistency.
 - 2) That whilst Sian is appointed on a temporary basis, there is a danger of losing her to a permanent post elsewhere, something the Council could not really cope with at this time
 - 3) That Sian did compete on an open basis with external candidates for the post when Peter Steed was appointed and came second on that occasion
 - 4) That the challenges in the coming years relating to the budget, FMS replacement, CPA Use of Resources and other financial and accounting changes, make it desirable for the authority to secure Sian's services on a permanent basis.
12. The main arguments against making Sian permanent are
 - 1) that it will deny the new Director of Resources the chance to influence the appointment
 - 2) That it is not in accordance with the Council's normal recruitment process
 - 3) That it may deny other internal candidates the opportunity, although four did apply when the post was advertised on a temporary basis prior to Sian's appointment
 - 4) That it may deny a capable candidate from outside the authority an opportunity within the Council

13. On balance members are recommended to confirm Sian Hansom as the permanent head of Financial Services. This could be done by way of deleting Sian's substantive post and redeploying her or running a recruitment exercise, but in this case it is felt that a members authorising a small departure from the corporate recruitment basis, as set out in the Hr comments below is the best way forward.

Consultation

14. There has been some consultation and discussion in the lead up to preparing this report with Andy Hudson, Terry Collins, Sian Hansom, Bill McCarthy, Heather Rice, Rob Livesey (the Register Office manager) and some other staff and no objections to what is proposed have been raised.

Implications

- . **Financial** – The contents of this report has been designed to ensure that there are no financial implications associated with these proposals.
- . **Human Resources (HR)** – The post of Head of Finance is currently filled on a temporary basis, however in order to bring stability to the Resources directorate and the Council's financial arrangements during the recruitment of a new Director, it is proposed to confirm the current postholder in the post on a permanent basis. Whilst this is a departure from the existing corporate recruitment policy, the temporary appointment was made on a competitive basis and the appointment was made by a properly constituted panel of elected Members and the confirmation of the postholder into the post on a permanent basis is therefore justified."
- . **Equalities** – It could be argued that the proposed way forward with regard to the Head of Financial Services post will strengthen the position of women who are under represented at Chief officer level, although it could also be argued that it will deny an opportunity to other under represented groups.
- . **Legal** - The Section 151 and Proper Officer responsibilities are statutory and are decisions reserved to Full Council or Staffing Matters Urgency Committee acting on its behalf
- . **Crime and Disorder** - None
- . **Information Technology (IT)** - None
- . **Property** - None
- . **Other** – None.

Recommendations

- . Staffing Matters & Urgency Committee is asked to:

- 1) Transfer the Register Office to Neighbourhood Services
- 2) Appoint Andy Hudson as the Proper officer for the Register Office, subject to their being no impact on grade as a result of this change
- 3) Appoint Sian Hansom as the Council's Section 151 officer and as officer responsible for all pensions issues currently delegated to the Director of Resources until a new Director of Resources starts
- 4) Appoint Sian Hansom permanently to the Head of Financial Services post
- 5) Appoint Max Thomas as acting Chief Internal Auditor

Reason

In order to ensure that adequate and timely measures are put in place to cover the Council's statutory responsibilities and to limit risks during this period of staff changes

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Report Approved

Date 9th May 2008

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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: Committee report on the role of Section 151 Officer

Annexes: None